

Parasitical diseases:

Ideally, at the purchase of your ferret, it is essential to have his stool analysed.

Coccidia, giardia and cryptosporidium: It is possible that the ferret does not present clinical signs and occasionally he can have soft stool and blood in his stool. Young ferrets are especially prone to being contaminated by parasites.

Heartworm:

A ferret that goes outside is more prone.

Ear mites:

Presence of thick, sticky brown secretions in the ears; the ferret may not present any sign of scratching his ears.

Mites are transmittable to cats, dogs and other ferrets.

Fleas: They are transmitted by dogs or cats. Treating all animals living together and their environment is essential to eliminate these parasites.

Prevention is better than cure!

The fact that ferrets are neutered or spayed at a young age, have a sedentary lifestyle, are curious and live to the maximum of their life span exposes them to many diseases and accidents.

The ferret's life span is only 5 to 8 years

A year in a ferret's life is like 8 years in a human's, so it's as if they aged 8 years every year.

An annual exam is necessary until 4 or 5 years old and as soon as the ferret is 5, he should be examined twice a year and have blood work done annually because of the high incidence of metabolic disease and neoplasm.

Ingestion of foreign bodies:

Young ferrets are curious and chew on everything they find. Most frequent are rubber, plastic, leather, tissue thread, peanuts, and almonds. As for adults, it is hair accumulation and debris of all sorts that causes a hard clog in the intestines (trichobezoar) over time.

Signs of disease are: Weariness, not eating and diarrhea. Some ferrets can have nausea, vomiting, rub their face, grind their teeth and drool.

Prevention: Never leave a ferret unattended and do not leave about things that are susceptible to be swallowed, give laxative during moult season and brush regularly.

Adrenal gland disease:

The disease manifests by hair loss starting at the end of winter or the beginning of spring. Occasionally fur will regrow in the fall and the hair loss restarts. This cycle can last 2 or 3 years before the hair does not grow back anymore. Some ferrets will scratch, vulva will be swollen and have vaginal secretions. A prostatic cyst obstructing the urethra can be observed in males.

Causes: Exaggerated stimulation of the adrenal glands and excessive production of sexual hormones by the ferret.

Treatment: Repeated Lupron injection (It is a synthetic hormone that blocks sexual hormone secretion by the adrenal glands) **This injection must be repeated every year.**

Prevention:

- Injecting a desloreline implant which is a synthesis analog for Gn RH that will stop the adrenal gland bombing by **diminishing the sexual hormone secretion.** The estimated duration is about 1 to 2 years.
- A Lupron injection before the hormonal peak, end of January or beginning of February. Many studies are driven to prove the effectiveness of prevention.

Pancreatic tumor (insulinoma)

At the beginning of the disease, the ferret can be **weak, lethargic**; slowly other signs will appear like **excessive salivation, rubbing the mouth** and progressive **weight loss**. Severe disease manifests by a hypoglycemia attack with severe signs of seizures, loss of conscience and advanced lethargy.

From a progressive hypoglycemia to a hypoglycemic attack due to an exaggerated secretion of insulin.

Mouth disease

Generally, ferrets do not show external visible signs of mouth disease except in case of a tumor.

Discoloration and fracture of the teeth after chewing cage wire and toys.

Plaque and dental calculus can lead to gingivitis and periodontitis.

Mouth ulcers: Accumulation of metabolic waste following a renal insufficiency.

Signs of disease and possible causes:

Weight loss, grainy stool, nausea, chronic vomiting or severe vomiting with weariness: Here are the diseases that could lead to these signs: Chronis gastro enteritis, food intolerance, hyper sensibility reaction, food indiscretion or viral gastro enteritis.

Not eating, weariness and weight loss: They are non-specific signs of disease: All ferret diseases can lead to a stop of these signs. A ferret that is not eating may have an hypoglycemia attack.

Vomiting: Ferrets do not vomit frequently and may not be vomiting during a gastro intestinal disease. Do not confuse with regurgitation that can be due to an esophageal problem.

Digestive causes: Gastritis, gastro enteritis or following the ingestion of a foreign body or an esophageal disease.

Extra digestive: Rare causes of vomiting in ferrets: Metabolic, hepatic or renal diseases.

Diarrhea: with greenish mucus (anorexic animals due to bile) or hemorrhagic.

Non-infectious diarrhea

Stress, food indiscretion, foreign body ingestion, medicine intoxication, gastro intestinal tumor, chronic gastro intestinal inflammation and sometimes metabolic diseases (greenish bilious coloration)

Infectious diarrhea: parasitical, bacterial, viral like coronavirus or distemper.

Chronic weight loss:

No others signs of disease:

Here are some of the most probable causes:

Refusing to eat: Change in taste or texture of the food he is used to eating.

Water restriction

Insufficient access to food: Insufficient quantities

Inadequate diet

Stress: Inadequate climate hot or cold

Concomitant disease: In this case other signs of disease will be present.

Teeth grinding, weakness, weariness, salivation: think of a pancreas tumor (insulinoma)

Weight loss, weakness, breathing difficulty, coughing: Think of a cardiac problem

Rectal prolapse: Generally after a diarrhea due to parasites like coccidia or an intestine inflammation, a tumor or a prostate problem following an adrenal gland disease or an inadequate anal gland ablation.

Blood in stool: same causes as diarrhea.

Drinks and urinates a lot: Renal insufficiency is highly suspected.

Ibuprofen intoxication: 220 mg/kg is fatal and can lead to neurological and gastro intestinal signs and a severe renal insufficiency.

Difficulty to urinate: In the majority of cases the cause is a prostatic cyst that as developed following an adrenal gland disease.

Rarely calculus in the bladder can be the cause for obstruction.

Weight loss, weakness, rear leg paresis: Think of Aleutian disease (parvovirus with antigenic stimulation, so an immune disease)

Breathing difficulty

Normal respiratory frequency is 33-36/min

Different causes may be responsible for coughing and respiratory difficulty.

A purely pulmonary problem can be caused by the influenza virus, distemper, a tumor or a trauma of the chest or pulmonary and rarely a bacterial or mycotic pneumonia.

Other causes can be of **cardiac origin, insolation** or an **anaphylactic allergic reaction**.

Liquid in the abdomen, weight loss, diminution in appetite, weakness, coughing and respiratory difficulty: It is probably a cardiac problem

Hair loss:

March to August: Seasonal alopecia.

Beginning of winter and swollen vulva: Think of adrenal gland disease.